

SCHOOL BUS

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Joe Musso

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SYNOPSIS: A group of high school students wrestle with their sanity and each other as they wait for the school bus. Will it ever arrive? What if it doesn't? Meanwhile, there are smelly feet, a rubber tarantula, marshmallows, and the B-flat scale.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MALE, 3 FEMALE, 1 EITHER, 5-20 EXTRAS)

ELLIOT (m).....A male high school student who likes shoes. (73 lines)

BIXBY (m)A male high school student, Elliot's best friend. (75 lines)

CINDY (f).....A female high school student, a bit stuck-up. (69 lines)

DANNY (m)A nerdy male high school student aspiring to be a dermatologist. (66 lines)

PATRICE (f).....A female high school student who has caught a rubber tarantula. (27 lines)

BAND MEMBER (m/f).....A high school student who can play a b-flat scale.(2 lines)

TALLULAH (f).....A female high school student allergic to the color yellow. (7 lines)

VERONICA (f).....A female high school student, the same actor as Tallulah. (14 lines)

STUDENTS (m/f)Group of five to twenty high school bus riders. (*STUDENT 1 - - 6 lines; STUDENT 2 - - 3 lines; STUDENT 3 - - 3 lines; STUDENT 4 - - 3 lines; STUDENT 5 - - 3 lines*)

SETTING

A high school, specifically the area where students wait for the school bus to pick them up and transport them home.

TIME: The present.

PROPERTIES

- Yo-yo
- Backpacks
- Schoolbooks
- MP3 player(s) with earphone(s)
- Wristwatch
- Shoe box with holes in it
- Cell phone
- Neon-colored or metallic-colored wig
- Clear bag full of large marshmallows

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Words in brackets [/] indicate dialogue implied but not spoken.

ACT ONE

AT RISE:

The present. An area at a high school where students wait for the school bus to pick them up and transport them home. ELLIOT is holding one of his tennis shoes and intently looking it over. He is wearing the other one. BIXBY, his best friend, stands next to him. CINDY, who is nearby reading a school book, can't help but hear ELLIOT and BIXBY. A BAND MEMBER stands at parade rest in the background, holding his/her instrument. The BAND MEMBER suddenly snaps to attention and plays the ascending notes of a B-flat scale once in quarter notes, and then returns to parade rest.

BIXBY: *(To ELLIOT.)* Elliot, your feet stink.

ELLIOT: Both of 'em?

BIXBY: *(Meaning yes.)* Uh-huh.

ELLIOT: *(Pointing at his foot that has a shoe on it.)* This one too?

BIXBY: Yep.

ELLIOT: But my shoe's still on it.

BIXBY: What? One foot stinks and the other's a rose?

ELLIOT: Only one way to find out. *(ELLIOT takes off the shoe and deeply inhales its inner aroma. Repulsed by the smell.)* Dude, you're right.

BIXBY: Simple logic.

ELLIOT: Wait a sec, Bixby, maybe just the shoe smells.

BIXBY: And not your foot?

ELLIOT: Yeah.

BIXBY: No way.

CINDY: You guys are gross.

ELLIOT: Hey Cindy.

CINDY: *(Stepping away from them.)* Don't talk to me.

CINDY returns to reading her schoolbook.

ELLIOT: *(To BIXBY.)* What's up with her?

BIXBY: No idea.

ELLIOT returns to looking over his shoe. BIXBY is bored, does nothing. After a few moments, ELLIOT stops looking at his shoe.

ELLIOT: I'll put my shoes back on, and we'll go.

BIXBY: We can't.

ELLIOT: Why not?

BIXBY: We're waiting for the school bus.

ELLIOT: Oh.

Pause.

BIXBY: Put on your shoes.

ELLIOT: Huh?

BIXBY: Put *on* your shoes.

ELLIOT: Now?

BIXBY: Yes.

ELLIOT: Why?

BIXBY: The bus could arrive any minute.

ELLIOT: To deliver us from school.

BIXBY: Bringing us home.

ELLIOT: Any minute. (*ELLIOT half-heartedly starts to put on his shoes, but then quits without any success.*) Remember that time we boarded the school bus and I sat next to Cindy? She screamed so loud she broke a window.

BIXBY: It's your feet, dude, they stink.

CINDY: (*Looking offstage.*) Look. It's the bus.

ELLIOT: (*Rushing to put on his shoes.*) Ah, man.

BIXBY: Hurry, dude . . . Hurry. (*ELLIOT only manages to put on one shoe before BIXBY dashes all of their hopes.*) Wait. It's not our bus.

ELLIOT: Not our - -

CINDY: (*Ending ELLIOT's sentence.*) - - bus?

BIXBY: No.

CINDY: But it's yellow.

BIXBY: They're all yellow.

ELLIOT: The big yellow cheese.

CINDY: Then whose bus it is?

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BIXBY: (*Pointing stage left at an oncoming group of STUDENTS.*)
Must be theirs.

ELLIOT, BIXBY, and CINDY watch a group of five to twenty STUDENTS enter from stage left. Some STUDENTS have backpacks; others carry their books; at least one listens to an mp3 player through earphones; one plays with a yo-yo. They all ignore ELLIOT, BIXBY, and CINDY as they walk toward stage right.

STUDENT 1: (*To STUDENT 2.*) My dog Fifi bit me on the nose.

STUDENT 3: (*To STUDENTS 4 and 5.*) Don't go to the prom.

STUDENT 2: (*To STUDENT 1.*) How?

STUDENT 4: (*To STUDENT 3.*) Why not?

STUDENT 1: (*To STUDENT 2.*) With her teeth.

STUDENT 5: (*To STUDENT 3.*) Yeah, why not?

The group exits at stage right, boarding the bus offstage.

ELLIOT: They look vaguely familiar.

BIXBY: They do?

CINDY: I think I have algebra with the yo-yo player.

ELLIOT: I recognize some of their shoes.

CINDY: Wait a minute. Our bus is supposed to arrive before theirs.

ELLIOT: It is?

CINDY: I'm sure of it.

BIXBY: Cindy's right . . . I think.

Slight pause and then DANNY enters in a run from stage left.

BIXBY: Danny.

ELLIOT: Dan-o.

CINDY: (*Apathetic.*) Hi Danny.

DANNY: (*Catching his breath.*) Did I miss it?

ELLIOT: What?

DANNY: The bus.

BIXBY: No.

ELLIOT: We're still here.

CINDY: Waiting.

DANNY: (*Looking at his wristwatch.*) The bus is late. Am I lucky or what?

CINDY: (*To DANNY.*) Your gain. Our pain.

DANNY: (*To CINDY.*) You don't have to be mean about it.

ELLIOT: (*To DANNY.*) You need faster shoes.

BIXBY: Where were you?

DANNY: In the gym . . . underneath the bleachers . . . curled up in a ball . . . crying.

ELLIOT: Why?

CINDY: Yeah, crybaby, why?

BIXBY: Cindy, can you show the man some compassion?

CINDY: No.

BIXBY: Witch.

CINDY sticks out her tongue at BIXBY.

BIXBY: (*Playfully reaching for CINDY's tongue.*) Give me that tongue.

ELLIOT: (*Holding back BIXBY.*) Man, she'll bite your fingers off.

CINDY shadowboxes in BIXBY's direction.

BIXBY: (*To CINDY.*) You wish.

CINDY: (*Raising her arms in triumph.*) The winn-a!

BIXBY: (*To ELLIOT.*) I'm cool.

ELLIOT releases him.

DANNY: Can you guys - -

ELLIOT: (*Interrupting.*) Huh?

DANNY: Can you guys - -

CINDY: (*Interrupting.*) And gal.

DANNY: And gal. Can you guys - -

CINDY: (*Interrupting.*) And gal.

DANNY: (*To CINDY.*) Will you let me finish?

CINDY: Fine.

DANNY: Can you guys, *and gal*, keep a secret?

BIXBY: I can't.

ELLIOT: Nope. Sorry.

CINDY: No way.

DANNY: But I . . . I need some advice.

ELLIOT: Go on, get it off your chest.

BIXBY: Spill the beans.

CINDY: Bare your soul.

DANNY: Oh, all right. You know that career placement test they offer in the counseling center?

ELLIOT: No.

BIXBY: (*Meaning no.*) Unh-unh.

CINDY: Never heard of it.

DANNY: You answer a bunch of questions, then it matches you with a career.

BIXBY: (*To DANNY.*) What if you answer "hats" and "rabbits"?

ELLIOT: (*To DANNY.*) Careful. It's a trick question.

DANNY: I don't know. Magician?

BIXBY: Yes.

CINDY: Danny wins the prize.

The BAND MEMBER snaps to attention, plays the ascending notes of a B-flat scale once in quarter notes, and then returns to parade rest.

ELLIOT: (*To DANNY.*) I thought you wanted to be a doctor.

CINDY: (*To DANNY.*) "I'm gonna be a doctor. I'm gonna be a doctor." That's all you ever talk about.

DANNY: I do want to be doctor.

BIXBY: Then why waste your time taking a career placement test?

ELLIOT: Time is a terrible thing to waste.

DANNY: I wanted the test to confirm what I already knew, at least what I thought I knew, that I wanted to be a dermatologist, just like my dad.

Slight pause.

ELLIOT: Danny, you're keeping me from my shoes.

CINDY: Preach it, Elliot.

BIXBY: I'm gonna be a bus driver.

ELLIOT: Will you run on time?

BIXBY: Never a second late.

CINDY: You're hired.

DANNY: *People, please . . .* I'm trying to tell you about my test.

ELLIOT: Sure, Dan-o.

BIXBY: I'm all ears.

CINDY: Might even be good for a laugh.

Slight pause.

DANNY: The test did *not* say "dermatologist."

CINDY: Ha. Ha.

BIXBY: What career did it say?

DANNY: Mortician.

ELLIOT: Huh?

DANNY: You know. Undertaker. Funeral director.

ELLIOT, BIXBY, and CINDY stifle laughs.

BIXBY: *(To DANNY.)* At least you'll work around a lot of flowers.

ELLIOT: Yeah, flowers smell great.

BIXBY: Easter lilies, daisies, carnations.

CINDY: *(To DANNY.)* Abandon all hope for dating cool girls.

DANNY: But I don't want to be a mortician. I want to be a dermatologist.

CINDY: Then go to medical school, you moron.

DANNY: You guys - -

CINDY: *(Interrupting.)* And gal.

DANNY: And gal, you don't get it, do you?

ELLIOT, BIXBY, and CINDY shrug their shoulders.

DANNY: If I don't become a mortician, that means I failed the test.

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The BAND MEMBER snaps to attention, plays the ascending notes of a B-flat scale once in quarter notes, and then returns to parade rest.

DANNY: I've *never, ever* failed a test. [I] Wouldn't know how.

BIXBY: Lucky stiff.

DANNY: In fact, if I *were* to fail a test, I couldn't get into medical school.

ELLIOT: You watch a lot of zombie movies, don't you?

DANNY: No.

CINDY: Will the bus ever come?

ELLIOT: Danny boy, if only you had read Shakespeare, this never would have happened.

BIXBY: He's right, you know.

DANNY: Shakespeare?

CINDY: Even I know that.

ELLIOT: Read Shakespeare and wear cool shoes.

CINDY screams. Pause.

CINDY: If the bus doesn't come soon, I'll scream.

CINDY returns to reading her schoolbook.

DANNY: *(To ELLIOT and BIXBY.)* My only hope is to get on the bus, zoom home, get a good night's sleep, return to school tomorrow, and re-take the test . . . Or my career as a dermatologist is finished. Kaput. Dead in the water.

CINDY: *(Closing her book.)* Every night, after brushing my teeth, I practice writing my autograph. Over and over and over. I'm gonna be an actress. I'm gonna be famous!

DANNY: *(To CINDY.)* Do *not* take the career placement test.

PATRICE enters carrying a shoebox with holes punched in the top.

ELLIOT: Hi Patrice. What you got in that shoe box. A pair 'a shoes?

PATRICE: No. A rubber tarantula.

BIXBY: Really?

DANNY: Let me see.

PATRICE: Only a peek.

She lifts the lid, barely, so that ELLIOT, BIXBY, and DANNY can see inside.

ELLIOT: Thing's a beast.

BIXBY: Biggest I've seen.

DANNY: Where'd you catch it?

PATRICE: Caught it this morning. On the way to school. On the bus.

CINDY: Our bus?

PATRICE: *(Meaning yes.)* Uh-huh.

ELLIOT: Cool.

PATRICE: Rubber tarantulas are rare.

BIXBY: Much more rare than plastic tarantulas.

ELLIOT: Though not near as rare as papier-mâché ones.

CINDY: *(To PATRICE.)* I learned in biology that animals should be allowed to live in their natural habitat. Keeping that tarantula in a shoebox is cruel.

PATRICE: That's why when we board the bus, I'm gonna release it back into the wild.

BIXBY AND ELLIOT: *(In unison.)* Hurrah for Patrice!

CINDY: *(Hugging PATRICE.)* I'm so proud of you.

CINDY releases PATRICE from the hug.

DANNY: *(To PATRICE.)* You almost missed the bus.

CINDY: No she didn't.

ELLIOT: Danny's gonna work with dead people after he graduates.

PATRICE: Really? My father's a funeral director. It's a noble profession.

DANNY: But I want to be a dermatologist.

ELLIOT: I want to work at a shoe factory.

BIXBY: As for me, I'm gonna be a - -

ELLIOT, CINDY AND DANNY: *(In unison, interrupting.)* Bus driver.

CINDY: *(Raising her hand.)* Actress.

BAND MEMBER: I'm going to play in an orchestra.

BIXBY: *(Meaning the BAND MEMBER.)* He *(Or "she.")* speaks!

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DANNY: What about you, Patrice? What do you want to be after you graduate?

PATRICE: (*Taking BIXBY by the hand.*) I want to be a school bus driver too, like Bixby.

ELLIOT, BIXBY, CINDY, DANNY, and PATRICE watch the same group of five to twenty STUDENTS who appeared earlier enter from stage right. Everyone in the group is walking and talking backward. Some STUDENTS have backpacks; others carry their books; at least one listens to an mp3 player; one is playing with a yo-yo. They all ignore ELLIOT, BIXBY, CINDY, DANNY, and PATRICE as they walk backward toward stage left.

STUDENT 1: (*To STUDENT 2.*) Nose the on me bit Fifi dog my.

STUDENT 3: (*To STUDENTS 4 and 5.*) Prom the to go don't.

STUDENT 2: (*To STUDENT 1.*) How?

STUDENT 4: (*To STUDENT 3.*) Not why?

STUDENT 1: (*To STUDENT 2.*) Teeth her with.

STUDENT 5: (*To STUDENT 3.*) Not why, yeah?

The group exits at stage left, and the BAND MEMBER, snapping to attention, immediately plays the ascending notes of a B-flat scale once in quarter notes, and then returns to parade rest. Next, CINDY screams. BIXBY and PATRICE unclasp hands.

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